

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

February 26, 2002 LB 600

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Vrtiska. Senator Bourne, on the Coordsen amendment.

SENATOR BOURNE: Thank you, Mr. President. Members, back in the special session the Appropriations Committee had cut a, oh, a tax from a documentary tax stamp that went to Affordable Housing, and I was opposed to doing that and I remember chiding Senator Thompson or talking to Senator Thompson about it and...and she...she said, well, you know, we need to do that, and et cetera, et cetera. And I was chiding her because she got on the Appropriations Committee and she immediately turned into a tight-fisted money miser, and I was giving her some static about that. I said, well, it's funny how things change once you get on the Appropriations Committee. Well, now I'm on the Appropriations Committee and I think the change has happened to me. My trouble with this bill is, is that right now we're facing a budget situation of \$185 million by the end of Fiscal Year 2002-2003. And Senator Wehrbein might have talked about some of this, but I was away when he was speaking, so if I'm being redundant I apologize. We heard Senator Wickersham mention that this would impact state aid to schools by I think it was 69 or 79 million dollars, so all of a sudden we're dealing with a budget shortfall of \$250 million by the end of next biennium if we go forward with LB 600. I will not dispute that perhaps there is some inequities in the way ag land is valued, and I understand that's a real problem. I think that throughout my career here I've been supportive of agriculture or rural Nebraska, trying to put jobs there and that, but when we face a budget situation that could approach \$250 million, I think that we need to be very cautious. I also want to point out that by the end of Fiscal Year 2002-2003 if we pass LB 600, I mentioned the deficit we'd have to deal with this session would have to be \$250 million, and then if you go out to the end of Fiscal Year 2004-2005 the current deficit is projected at just over \$300 million. Adding LB 600 costs, if the state aid to schools would increase, you're talking almost \$380 million that would have to be dealt with in the next two years. So you can see that the state contribution is significant, particularly when we're facing budget shortfalls. I think it's...it's going to be difficult enough to deal with a \$180 million problem by the end of April. I think it would be almost impossible to deal